



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

Highway Marker Program

POLICY #1

Marker Criteria

The state historical highway marker program documents facts, persons, events, and places prominently identified with the history of the nation, state, or region. The text for each proposed marker shall be reviewed and edited by the manager of the marker program and the staff of the Department of Historic Resources and, with the location, shall be approved by the Board of Historic Resources.

No marker shall be erected to commemorate a living person.

In order for an historic event to be eligible for a marker, the event must have occurred at least fifty years ago. Likewise, a place or person must have attained its significance at least fifty years ago, although there are exceptions if the event, place, or person is of extraordinary historical significance.

The size and shape of the state marker shall be that presently in use. Only the following shall appear on the marker: the seal of Virginia; identification code; title; text; name of the Department of Historic Resources; and the year the marker was approved.

Markers shall be erected in safe locations, at or close to the places being described, and where they will be visible to the public. When a marker is to be placed in a Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) right-of-way, VDOT shall approve the site and install and maintain the marker. When a marker is to be placed in a locality's right-of-way, the local public works department shall approve the site and install and maintain the marker.

(Approved by the Board of Historic Resources, 8 December 1993; revised 17 March 2016 and 13 December 2018)



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POLICY #2

Marker Retirement

Markers may be retired if they

- 1.) Contain errors of fact that can be documented with reliable sources
- 2.) Are so damaged, deteriorated, illegible, unstable, or unsafe that the cost of repair would approach the cost of a new marker
- 3.) Require refurbishment, and have very brief texts, and lack historical context, such that their educational value is severely limited. Such markers, generally erected from the 1920s through the 1950s, do not meet the modern standards of the program.

DHR reserves the right to update and replace markers regardless of their physical condition in cases where, after a detailed evaluation based on primary and reliable secondary sources, marker program staff and the Board of Historic Resources determine that the existing text is inadequate and merits rewriting. Such action is dependent on the availability of funding for a replacement marker.

DHR will make an effort to locate and notify the original sponsor of any marker that is retired or replaced.

(Approved by the Board of Historic Resources, 17 September 2015; revised 18 June 2020; 17 September 2020)



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POLICY #3

Marker Conditional Donations

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR), with the concurrence of the Directional and Service Signing Manager at the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), will donate retired highway markers to local governments, educational institutions, and charitable, religious, and nonprofit organizations (recipients) under the following conditions:

- a.) A potential recipient must fill out an application provided by DHR. If the application is approved, the recipient must sign a conditional donation agreement provided by DHR.
- b.) Markers will not be donated to private individual persons. The recipient must belong to one of the categories listed here:
<http://dgs.virginia.gov/OfficeofSurplusPropertyManagement/Eligibility/tabid/130/Default.aspx>.
(It is not necessary to complete the Department of General Services Eligibility Application available through this website.)
- c.) The recipient must have an indoor facility in which to store the marker. The marker must not be permanently erected outdoors, but it may be displayed outdoors in temporary exhibitions. Recipient is responsible for implementing reasonable measures to prevent the marker from being stolen, damaged, or vandalized.
- d.) The marker display must be accompanied by an interpretive text that explains why the sign was retired from the Virginia highway marker program. DHR must approve this text.
- e.) The marker must be returned to VDOT if the recipient decides to remove it from public display for more than 6 consecutive weeks in any calendar year (unless the recipient receives the prior written approval of DHR), if the recipient ceases to exist as an entity or organization recognized under Virginia law, or if DHR determines that the recipient is not complying with the terms set forth herein or in the conditional donation agreement. DHR will then seek a new recipient or direct VDOT to destroy/recycle the marker.

- f.) Recipients may not loan, transfer, or assign the marker to any third party, regardless of the intent or purpose of such loan, transfer, or assignment, without the express written consent of DHR.
- g.) When feasible and at DHR's sole discretion, DHR will attempt to contact the original sponsor when a marker is retired to determine whether the original sponsor would be interested in and would qualify to accept the retired marker for public display.
- h.) If the original sponsor no longer exists, is incapable of satisfying the terms set forth herein and in the written conditional donation agreement, or is not interested in accepting the marker, DHR will contact each organization that has requested such retired marker in the order that such request was received in writing, or other organizations with such capacity and interest, in DHR's sole discretion.
- i.) DHR will not donate retired markers that are fragile, badly damaged, or otherwise unsafe to transport or display.
- j.) Recipients may not undertake any material conservation efforts or apply any treatments or solutions including cleaning solutions to the marker without receiving the prior written approval of DHR. No third party should attempt to conserve or clean a marker. If the marker exhibits damage or deterioration, the Recipient must contact DHR within 30 calendar days.
- k.) VDOT will not deliver markers to recipients and will not pick up a marker in the event that it must be returned to VDOT.
- l.) Markers are subject to recall by DHR. Recipients must return the Marker to the designated VDOT facility within 30 calendar days of receiving written notice of recall.

VDOT will store retired markers for 60 days. If no recipient has been identified in that time, DHR may authorize VDOT to destroy/recycle the marker.

(Approved by the Board of Historic Resources, 10 December 2015)



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POLICY #4

Marker Program Statement of Purpose

The Virginia historical highway marker program documents facts, persons, events, and places prominently identified with the history of the nation, state, or region. DHR's purpose in erecting markers is to educate the public about Virginia's history, not to honor, memorialize, or commemorate persons, events, or places. Because highway markers are not honorific in nature, they do not serve the same purpose as monuments, statues, memorial plaques, or war memorials.

(Approved by the Board of Historic Resources, 18 June 2020)



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POLICY #5

Marker Application Approval Procedures

The Highway Marker Program will accept applications from the public in four cycles per year. Using the scoring criteria outlined below, DHR staff will select five applications from the pool received by the deadline for each cycle. At the next quarterly meeting of the Board of Historic Resources (BHR), staff will present the list of selected applications for approval. At the subsequent quarterly meeting of the BHR, staff will present the texts of those five markers for approval.

Any applicant whose project is not selected will be eligible to apply again in the future, but applications will not automatically be carried over to future board cycles.

Scoring Criteria:

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| 25 points | Has potential to educate the public |
| 25 points | Fills a gap in the historical marker program in order to address a topic that the program has not extensively covered |
| 20 points | Addresses the history of a community that has been marginalized or underrepresented |
| 20 points | Reflects a breadth of historical significance that extends beyond the locality, preferably demonstrating statewide or national significance |
| 10 points | Contributes to a more equitable geographic distribution of markers |

(Approved by the Board of Historic Resources, 9 December 2021)